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Individuals with Differences Supported by The Arc Jacksonville to Benefit from New Florida State Budget

Jacksonville, FL, March 17, 2022: Florida's 2022 Legislative Session ended Monday and the new state budget includes several big wins for people with Intellectual and Developmental Differences (IDD).

The system that supports individuals with IDD was fragile prior to the pandemic, but COVID-19 has exacerbated existing problems. Rapidly rising wages created critical worker shortages that placed many individuals with IDD at risk of losing the supports needed to live in their communities.

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) work directly with people who have IDD, assisting with daily care and integration into the community. The new budget, which requires approval from Governor DeSantis, includes funding for the sole purpose of increasing DSP wages. For many DSPs this will be a 25-50% pay increase and will ensure they are paid a living wage.

The budget also includes \$8.5 million for dental services for individuals with IDD. An additional \$300,000 was allocated for The Arc Jacksonville to implement a program that helps adults build life skills and transition to community employment, through a more inclusive and experiential transition program.

"We appreciate the legislature, especially our local champions who lead the charge, Senator Aaron Bean and Representative Clay Yarborough, for making this significant commitment to people with IDD." Said Kari Bates, President and CEO of The Arc Jacksonville. "This funding will give The Arc Jacksonville and other providers the ability to provide services to many deserving people who are in need and have been waiting."

"It was a priority for the legislature that the wages of Direct Support Professionals reflect the importance of the work they do supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental differences. This will help ensure Florida's most vulnerable citizens are able to live independent and meaningful lives," said Senator Aaron Bean.

About The Arc Jacksonville

The Arc Jacksonville serves and advocates for individuals with intellectual and developmental differences to achieve their full potential and to participate in community life. Through incredible partnerships within the Northeast Florida community, The Arc Jacksonville, a local nonprofit, provides a full complement of residential, educational, training, work readiness, employment, mental health, and community inclusion initiatives.

Editor's Note: The Arc Jacksonville is not an acronym and Arc should never be in all capital letters. When referring to the organization, please use The Arc Jacksonville, not The ARC, The ARC Jacksonville or ARC. The Arc Jacksonville should be considered as a title or phrase. Please refer to the individuals as having "differences" and not "disabilities."

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